

HEAT 29635

A

FULL AND AUTHENTIC

DIARY

OF THE

ASHANTI EXPEDITION,

BY

JOSEPH HAMMOND THOMAS,

2nd BATT. RIFLE BRIGADE.

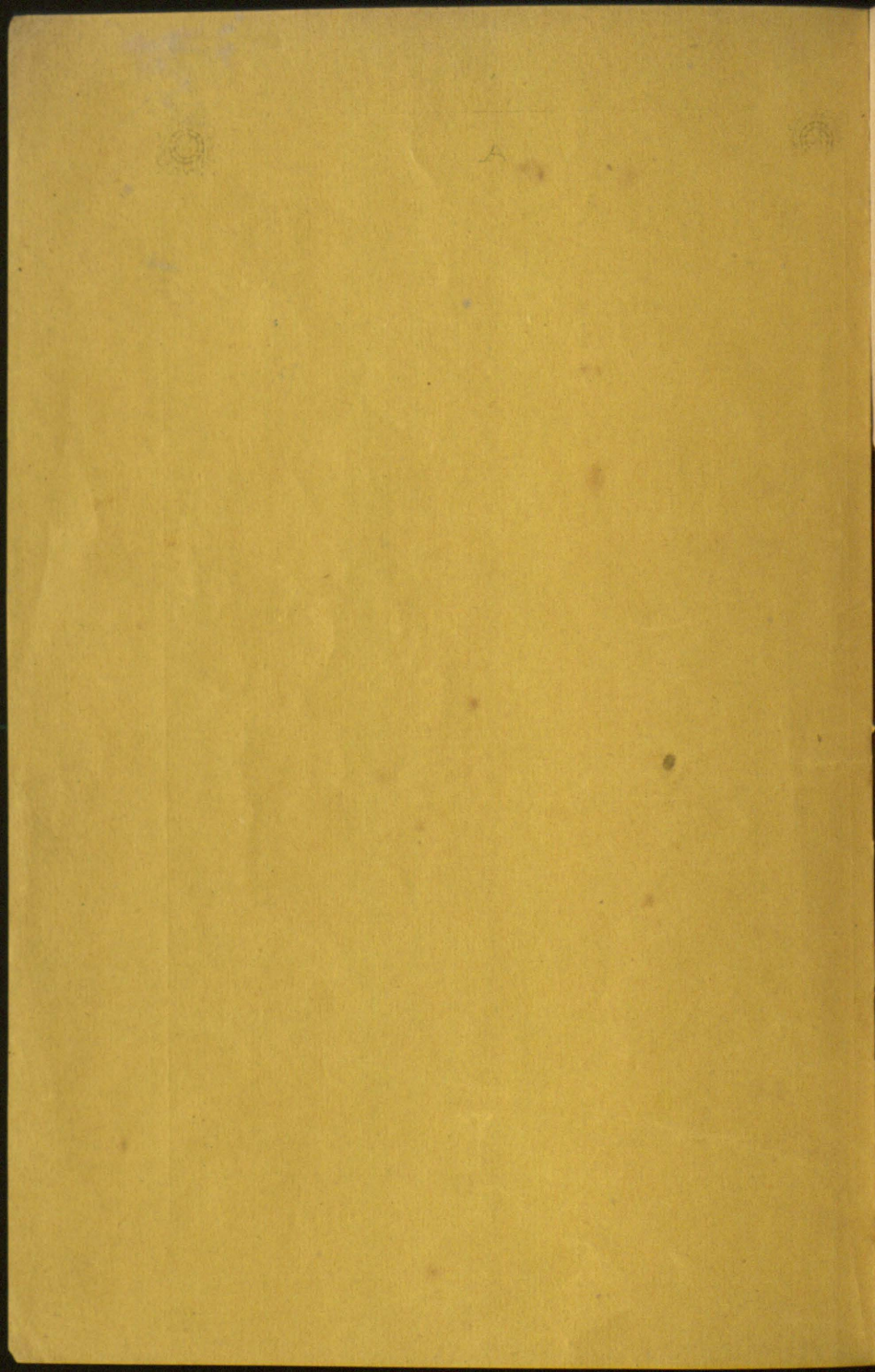
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## TO THE READER.

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In publishing a pamphlet on the Ashanti War (written by my son) who volunteered into the Service, the greatness of the undertaking must be well-known. And the unhealthy climate of the Gold Coast—its pestilential air, great heat, torments of the insects, march, with heavy accoutrements ; combined with other serious causes, too numerous to particularise here, were beyond conception, and a large number of our noble countrymen fell sorrowful victims in that land. After a long march, and five days' fighting with about 3,500 men against upwards of 30,000 Ashantis, by whom they were surrounded on every side, and who, be it remembered, fought desperately, but were defeated with immense slaughter—too much praise cannot be given to Sir Garnet Wolseley and officers for their kind and generous conduct to the men. When our brave Army returned to Cape Coast Castle, most of the men and officers were mere skeletons. On their arrival at Portsmouth they were received with every manifestation of joy, and were invited to a grand banquet, and afterwards reviewed by her most gracious Majesty the Queen ; the Rifle Brigade being headed by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, as Colonel of that Regiment. The public heartily cheered the heroes of the Ashanti War, and from many an Englishman was heard the cry, "Long may they live to enjoy the laurels they have so nobly won." May we all pass a parting glance on the memories of those departed heroes, who fell fighting for their Queen and country.

JOHN THOMAS.

*Pembroke Dock, February, 1875.*




# DIARY

OF THE

## ASHANTI EXPEDITION.

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 HIS Diary was written during the march from Cape Coast Castle to Coomassie, and the march back. It is not so minute in detail as I should wish, but the limited halts, and the unceasing duties to be performed, made this an utter impossibility, and I must apologise for any shortcomings that may appear.

NOVEMBER 21st, 1873.—The 2nd Battalion left Birr (Ireland), by special trains at 3 and 3 30 a.m. on the 21st November, 1873, and arrived at Cork about 11 a.m., and proceeded in two river steamers to Queenstown. It rained heavily during the trip, and we were all thoroughly drenched by the time we embarked in Her Majesty's Ship "Himalaya." After a good deal of confusion (which always attends the embarkation, and disembarkation of troops) we manned the capstan, and weighed anchor at 4 30 p.m. As we steamed slowly out of the harbour the vessels manned their rigging and lustily cheered us, whilst those on shore waved us farewell with handkerchiefs, etc.

22nd NOVEMBER.—Heavy gale, the ship rolled 24 degrees, nearly all the battalion were sick, and were perfectly useless, but a few days fine weather brought most of them round, and they quickly regained their appetites.

26th NOVEMBER.—Reached Maderia at 7 30 a.m. A great number of boats came off with fruit, cheese, etc., which they wished to exchange for old uniforms or clothes of any description, not caring to take coin, but readily taking tobacco. We sailed again at 10 25 p.m., the Channel Fleet which lay in Funchal bay saluting us as we steamed out, by burning blue lights, and manning the yards. The weather was beautifully fine, and we could find a great change in the temperature.

*December 1.*—Arrived at St. Vincent Islands at 5 p.m. These Islands are very rugged and bare, and look very desolate. The town of the Islands has a very pretty appearance, being built of stone, (coloured). Yellow seemed the fashionable colour. Some boats came out to us, manned by blacks, with cocoa-nuts, bananas, oranges and cheese (made of goat's milk). They would not take our bronze coin, and wanted a threepenny-bit for a single article. A boat's crew was sent on shore to purchase poultry, but a very inferior sample they brought with them. They quickly bolted the grain they were given, and appeared in the last stage of starvation.

*December 2.*—Her Majesty's ship "Tamar," having on board the 23rd Regiment, arrived at 6 a.m. and exchanged salutes. We left at 1 p.m. Weather, very hot, not a breath of wind stirring. To-day we exchanged our dark uniforms for the "Ashanti clothing," which was quite a relief. In the evening we had an impromptu concert on the quarter-deck. A few instruments, which were brought by members of the band, who volunteered to the ranks, were brought into requisition, and several selections were played, songs sung and recitations given; altogether a most enjoyable evening was spent. We continued these entertainments almost every evening, very satisfactorily, and the officers entered into the spirit of the undertaking with as much interest as the men.

*December 9.*—Arrived off Cape Coast Castle at 7 p.m. It was too dark to see what the Castle was like, so we turned in with the intention of having an early view.



*December 10.*—I was up betimes, and stowed my hammock away before any of my comrades, just as the sun was rising. I was agreeably surprised at the view before me. The Castle is a well built and strong fortress, and stands upon a rock close to the sea, and outside the walls of the fort in a large native town with a population of between ten and fifteen thousand inhabitants. The fort covers several acres, and mounts one hundred guns, bristling from walls twenty-two to twenty-five feet high. The interior is a great irregular pile; in some parts several stories high. The Council Chamber and the Government Offices are placed on the west side, where is also a gallery paved with squares of black and white marble, while the Barracks are near the bastions with mounted guns.

The Danes were the original constructors: they sold it to the Dutch; and the English under Admiral Homes captured it in the seventeenth century, since which time it has continued in our hands.

The landing is very bad and dangerous, and is effected in a small bay, under the north-eastern bastion of the Castle, where is a projecting ridge of rocks, and it requires considerable skill to manage the surf-boats and canoes. From May to August the surf around is very violent, but in December, January and February there is less danger of upsetting the fragile craft used by the natives. The rock on which the Castle is built is called Tabarn, and is eighteen feet above the sea-level.

We received an order from the Castle to-day that the arrangements for landing the troops were not completed.

*December 11.*—All reserve stores were got on deck, and stowed in surf-boats to be sent on shore. Orders from the Castle to make preparations for a "cruise" also received.

*December 12.*—The detachment of Engineers, Army Service Corps, and Army Hospital Corps, which accompanied the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, disembark, and take up quarters at Cape Coast Castle.

*December 13.*—Weighed anchor about 4 p.m., and steamed slowly

out to sea. The armourer was employed to-day sharpening the points of the sword bayonets and examining the rifles.

*December 14 to 22.*—Still cruising about; had several parades, and practised packing the tents and clothing into convenient bundles for the natives to carry. Saw several sharks; some of the officers baited a line with a piece of pork, and soon hauled a young bottle-nosed shark on board. It measured 6 feet 4 inches, and caused some merriment by being drawn up and down the deck until it was quite exhausted. The sailors then despatched it with hatchets, and cooked a portion. I cannot say I much admire the flavour of shark, but the sailors seemed to enjoy it immensely. Several shoals of flying-fish came very near us and two were caught, having struck themselves in some part of the rigging. Weather delightful. Too hot to sleep below, so bring our blankets on deck and lay where we can.

*December 23.*—Met H.M.S. "Tamar" with 23rd Regiment, and H.M.S. "Sarmatian" with 42nd Highlanders, and passed salutes. The latter vessel takes all letters from us for England, and steers for Cape Coast.

*December 25.* This morning we paraded on the quarterdeck at 10 o'clock, and after the morning service was read, a very able discourse was given by the chaplain. Our Christmas dinner was not a very enviable one; it consisted of boiled pork, pea soup, soft bread, and pickles, with our usual allowance of Stout (one pint). An extra pint was served out in the evening, and the men formed themselves into groups, chatted and sung quite merrily, until the last post sounded at 9 p.m., when hammocks were swung and we all "turned in."

*December 26.*—The "Beacon" gun boat arrives alongside at 8 45 p.m. with despatches and mails; delivers them, and steers for Cape Coast about 10 p.m. She had been three days looking for us.

*December 28.*—Met the "Simoon" returning from Ascension with a number of invalids to Cape Coast.



*December 30.*—Steamed towards Cape Coast and sighted land about 8 a.m.; anchored at 2 p.m. within one and a half miles of the Castle. Orders came on board that we were to disembark on the 1st January 1874, and commence marching up the country by "wings."

*January 1, 1874.*—Left wing, consisting of 17 officers, 332 men, disembark from "Himalaya" in several large launches (which were linked together) at 2 a.m., and were towed by a steam-launch to within about three hundred yards from the shore; they were then with much difficulty transferred to the surf-boats, manned by Fantees, and paddled to the beach. Here ropes were thrown into the boats, and they were hauled high and dry by the natives, who kept up an incessant yelling. The wing was formed up under the walls of the Castle, the roll called, and all being present the march commenced—the first halt, Inguabim (7 miles) being reached about 9 a.m.

*January 2.*—Right wing disembark, 16 officers, 310 men, about 2 a.m., and marched the first stage, Inguabim. The left wing started at 3 a.m., and had marched to the second stage Acroful,  $7\frac{1}{4}$  miles, passing through the village of Assambo.

*January 3.*—Left wing marched to Yan-coomassie Fanti,  $10\frac{1}{4}$  miles, passing through Dunquah, the right wing marching to Acroful. The path thus far was from six to eight feet wide, cut through the dense jungle. It was fearfully oppressive, and the seventy rounds of ammunition hung very heavily around our waists, and very much retarded our progress.

*January 4.*—Left wing marched to Mansu  $11\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The right wing marching to Yan-coomassie Fanti. Path not so wide and getting much rougher.

*January 5.*—Left wing crossed Okee river at Inglasu, and marched through Accrofooma to Sutah, 11 miles. On account of having a long march next day one non-commissioned officer and four cooks with native escort are sent on in the evening, with the camp-kettles, &c.,

to Faisoowah to prepare cocoa for the following morning. Right wing marched to Mansu.

*January 6.*—Left wing marched to Faisoowah, through Baduso; halted for half-an-hour and had cocoa. Road from Sutah to Faisoowah very bad. All the villages we have passed so far are destroyed by the Ashantees. Marched from Faisoowah to Yan-coomassie Assin. Total distance 13 miles; greater distance of this composed of logs thrown across the path. Right wing marched to Sutah.

*January 7.*—Left wing marched through Amponsi and Ahcum-  
ifudi, crossing Shambana river to Barraco, about 10 miles. Right wing marched to Yan-coomassie Assin. During the halt at Barraco and Yan-coomassie Assin, the battalion was employed in sanitary fatigues, etc., cutting down the jungle and burning the brushwood, to clear the air of the innumerable swarms of insects. About 500 yards round the encampment was thus cleared. The mornings and evenings were occupied in these fatigues. During the day the battalion were not allowed out of the bungalows, as the heat was so intense. Orders received that sentries with loaded rifles were to be placed over the native carriers so as to warn them, and in trying to desert, orders were given to shoot them. Fever and dysentery commence to make their appearance. Some severe cases were sent on to Barraco.

*January 14.*—Orders received that the men were to be warned against sleeping on the ground (several cases of dysentery being traced to this cause) and that they must be instructed to build "bedsteads" and huts after the Ashanti pattern, since north of the Prah no more huts would be found ready built.

*January 17.*—Left wing marched to Prah Sue on the river Prah, about 7 miles. Found the Naval Brigade encamped there, and also Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley's staff. Right wing marched to Barraco.



*January 18.*—Right wing marched to Prah Sue, and found left wing. The Battalion halted here until January 20th. From the coast up to Prah Sue huts had been provided for the troupes marching up country. They were built of bamboo, and covered with plantain and palm leaves, each hut large enough to contain a company of about 70 men; smaller ones had been built for the officers. In each hut "Bedsteads" had been erected about two feet from the ground, made also of split bamboo. Large water filters had been provided at Inquabim and Accrowful, at which two stations the water was very bad, and also scarce. Condensed water had to be carried from Cape Coast Castle to Inquabim, a distance of seven miles, by native carriers, in kegs. Farther up the country the water was better. At Sutah it was obtained from the Okee river; at Barraco from the Shambana, and at Prah Sue from the river Prah. Bathing was allowed after sundown at these stations.

The Prah is by far the largest river of the three, and is about 250 feet wide. A narrow bridge had been thrown across it by the engineers; the current is very strong, and the river contains an abundance of fish. All supplies necessary for the maintenance of the battalion were carried by natives on their heads, and a great many women were also employed for this purpose. They were found to be more useful and willing than the men; the average weight which was carried by them being about 70 pounds. The men's tents, waterproof sheets and extra clothing, were also carried by natives, three men putting their things together, and making a convenient package of it. For the sick, hammocks slung to a strong bamboo pole, and carried by four natives (on their heads), had been provided at the rate of six per hundred men, and two extra carriers were allowed for each hammock as reliefs. The rations with which the battalion was supplied during the expedition, consisted of tea, sugar, cocoa, biscuits, (sometimes bread baked in the field bakeries,) preserved meats, salt meat, preserved vegetables, sausages and cheese.

Rum was also issued, medicinally, diluted with lime juice or quinine, on the average three times a week. Fresh meat was issued about twice a week, but was very poor and tough.

On the arrival at the Prah sue, soap and tobacco were issued to the men, the latter being especially required. I would strongly advise anyone visiting such a pestilential climate as the West Coast of Africa, to carry a sufficient quantity of tobacco, as smoking drives away the swarms of insects with which the air is loaded, and also purifies it.

*January 21.*—The battalion marched to Essiamau, distance about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  miles. On account of the great distance, a halt was made. Altobiassé, about 7 miles from Prah sue, half a pint of cocoa was issued to the men. The strength of the battalion at Essiamau, was 27 officers, 583 men, having lost, since leaving Cape Coast Castle, six officers and 69 men, who were sent back on account of fever and dysentery. No huts at Essiamau, only long open sheds, covered with palm leaves. Around the Control Stores, a strong stockade had been built by the natives, (Fantees.)

*January 22.*—Marched to Accrofoomu, a distance of about 14 miles. No halt was made; crossed river Froom. On account of excessive heat, and length of march, 15 men fell out. Sheds the same as at Essiamau, but insufficient to accommodate the whole battalion, consequently "lean-to's" had to be erected, and tents pitched.

*January 23.*—Marched to Moinsey, about 8 miles, at the foot of the 'Adansi' Hills. No huts of any description. Rait's Artillery and several companies of native levees encamped here. The men cleared the bush, and built huts. Five prisoners of King Koffee were sent in from Coomassie: a Frenchman, a German, his wife and two children. They were in a pitiable condition; and were quite overcome with their reception by Sir Garnet and the staff. They had been 4 years in Coomassie.

*January 24.*—Crossed the Adansi Hills, which ascend very steep for about 800 feet, and descend in the same manner. On the top



was an entrenched encampment, garrisoned by two companies of the 2nd West Indian Regiment. Marched through Quissah, a large village deserted by Ashantees, and arrived at Foomannah, a still larger village, also entirely deserted by the enemy, (distance about 8 miles). The battalion was quartered in the native houses, which are built of mud and wattles, and thatched with palm and plantain leaves. The walls only enclosing three sides, the fourth being left open for entrance; the floor raised about 2 or 3 feet from the ground, consisting of a bank of clay on which the house is built; the whole painted over with red-ochre. Sir Garnet Wolseley and staff here. Also the Naval Brigade, Rait's Artillery, Rupell's Regiment of Natives, Wood's Native Regiment, and Lord Gifford's scouts at Dompoussu, about two and a half miles north of Foomannah. In the morning an envoy from Coomassie had arrived, and on his departure all the regiments were turned out and formed two ranks facing inwards, and he and his suite marched through the ranks of the troops, the buglers of the battalion playing the "salute." They looked anything but happy, and no doubt they had cause, for they gave Sir Garnet to understand that if the news they carried to King Koffee was not satisfactory, they would immediately be sacrificed.

*January 25.*—Halted at Foomannah. Divine Service was held at 7 a.m., read by Colonel Warren, 2nd B.R.B. In the afternoon the battalion was inspected by Sir Garnet Wolseley. The reserve ammunition, consisting of 70 rounds per man, received, carried by 30 Kroomen, who were attached to battalion. Letters sent to Cape Coast Castle by Fantee runners for England.

*January 26.*—Halted at Foomannah. Brevet-Major Nicholl's Company (A), and a company of the Naval Brigade, both under command of Major Stephens, marched to Dompoussu, and took part in a reconnaissance, pushed forward from that place, and returned in the evening. The scouts and Wood's regiment pushed forward and established outlying picquets at Kiang Boassu, about 5 miles north

of Foomannah, and about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Dompoussu. 42nd (Highlanders) and about 100 men of the 23rd (Welsh) [the remainder of this Regiment was still on board H.M.S. Tamar at Cape Coast] arrived at Quissah. Five ounces of tobacco issued per man in the evening. Two Ashantee prisoners brought in, who had been captured by a working party of Engineers which accompanied the reconnaissance, two others having been shot trying to escape.

*January 27.*—Halted. Naval Brigade, Rait's Artillery Engineers, and the remainder of native regiments leave for the front; two companies of West India Regiments remain.

*January 28.*—Halted. The detachment 23rd Regiment passed through about 6.30 a.m., on a reconnaissance to Kiang Boassu.

*January 29.*—Marched through Dompoussu and Kiang Boassu to Ahkankuassie, distance about 10 miles. Passed the Naval Brigade and detachment of 23rd Regiment at Kiang Boassu. In the evening the whole European Brigade was concentrated at Ahkankuassie: Naval Brigade on the extreme left. It had a slight skirmish in the morning, in which Captain Nicholl, of the Hampshire Militia, attached to Wood's Native Regiment, and three Kossoos were killed, and two marines and two sailors severely wounded. The battalion furnished an outlying picquet (G Company) at Adadwassu, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Ahkankuassie. Rations issued for following day in case of a night attack; men to carry them on the march to-morrow; also ten rounds of ammunition (loosed) extra. The enemy is expected to be met to-morrow.

*January 30.*—Marched through Adadwassie (when G Company joined) to Insarfú, distance about 10 miles. Battalion formed the rear guard of the European Brigade. Enemy reported to be encamped about 3 miles north of Insarfú.

*January 31.*—All the baggage "parked" at Insarfú, which place had been stockaded and garrisoned by two companies of the 2nd



West India Regiment and sick Europeans. Marched at 6.45 a.m., 42nd Regiment in advance; Native Regiments and Naval Brigade on the flanks; 2nd Battalion Rifles as rear guard; the whole forming a square. In the centre were the Doolies, hammocks, and ammunition; Rait's Artillery was with advanced guard, and the Rocket Batteries of the Naval Brigade on the flanks; Sir Garnet Wolseley's head quarters in the centre, guarded by detachment of 23rd Regiment. Came up with the enemy and attacked them at 8.30. At first they fired somewhat wildly, but soon settled down to work in earnest, and made a most determined resistance. The rattle of the breech-loader could be heard all round, so it was evident that they had experienced generals by their manœuvres. We kept up a murderous fire until 3 o'clock p.m., their slugs falling like hail amongst us, when their firing slackened, and they gave way, having suffered very severely. The battalion had Major Stephens slightly wounded in wrist, Lieutenant Smyth a slug in thigh, Lieutenant Sherston very severely wounded in right shoulder; also six men severely wounded. The 42nd then took the village of Amoafu; they had nine officers and 105 men wounded. The wounded had been sent back to the rear to a small village, Quahmau, which had been stockaded, and here they were attacked by about 3.30 p.m. F and E Companies (2nd B.R.B.) were immediately ordered to march to the relief, and afterwards to be reinforced by G Company, which conveyed a party of sick and wounded to Insarfu. The enemy offered a strong resistance, but were at last compelled to retire. The battalion halted at Eginassie, and cleared the bush, stockaded the place, and camped for the night, building lean-to's. At 10.30 p.m. G Company returned, which, after the retreat of the enemy from Quahman, escorted a convoy of sick and wounded to Insarfu. They brought back a small amount of baggage from Insarfu; were attacked on return, when the carriers threw down their baggage and ran into the bush. About 4 a.m. a great "scare" took place; the sentries on inlying picquets fired a few shots, and all the carriers rushed into the camp. Fortunately,

we lay down that night with our belts on, and rifles by us, and were fully prepared to meet our foes. However, it turned out to be a false alarm, and quiet was soon restored. The carriers would not venture ten yards away from us after that, and crouched at our feet as if imploring us not to drive them to their own camp. At 5.30 a.m. the battalion extended from Amoaful to Eginassie, and formed a line of picquets, and the 42nd from Eginassie to Insarfufu, until all the baggage had been collected and brought into Amoaful, to which place the battalion then marched and encamped. Had to bury 16 dead Ashantis on the camping ground, and the burial party afterwards collected eleven hundred and seventy bodies of the enemy. The battalion was only 620 strong in the engagement, and fired 3,590 rounds of ammunition. In the meantime the village of Becquoui,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the west of Amoaful, was attacked by a detachment of 42nd and the Naval Brigade, and entirely destroyed. Four days' rations drawn in the evening, which were carried by the spare carriers belonging to the hammocks, in the empty Doolies, and by the men of the battalion.

*February 2.*—Paraded at 6 a.m., the battalion leading the advance, H and C Companies proceeding with the advanced guard, under Colonel McLeod of the 42nd. Soon came up with the advance guard of the enemy, about 1,000 strong, but no effective resistance was offered by them. The enemy seemed to be in full flight, to judge from the signs of the road, which was strewn with food, clothes, materials of war, &c., &c. Passed through several small villages, which were deserted, and in which, as well as in their camp, the fires were still burning, and plantains, &c., on them cooking. Marched about 8 miles, and then halted at Aggimamu, where we erected huts. H and C Companies proceeded  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles farther on (advanced guard) to the village of Dadwabin. In the evening Sir Garnet asked the men whether, as there were only four days' rations left, and it would take six days to reach Coomassie and back, they were willing to do the



six days' work on the four days' rations ; as, if they would, they would, probably, be able to get back to the coast at least a fortnight sooner than if they waited for a convoy with rations here. The men unanimously voted to make the four days' rations last the six days. On the march from Amoaful to Aggimanu only the leading company of the advanced guard was engaged, and fired forty rounds. Another supply of rations of preserved meat, biscuit, and tea was drawn, which left four days' rations on hand.

*February 3.*—Two roads branch off from Aggimanu to Coomassie. Troops take the left one, starting at about 5.30 a.m., and march to where the advanced guard was halted, which, on our coming up, pushed forward, and is very soon engaged (about 8.30 a.m.) The whole of both forces were brought into action, and a very obstinate fight took place, the enemy standing their ground and firing rapidly until noon, when a flag of truce came in ; but, notwithstanding, the enemy soon opened fire again, and finding they could not meet us in the bush they took to ambuscades, &c., by which we quickly lost five of our scouts. After giving them some deadly volleys they were forced across the river Dah, then about three feet deep, and forty yards wide. We kept on the south side by the bank of the river, and after clearing away the bush, and dragging away the numerous bodies to some distance, we prepared our camp. Until dark the Ashantis kept still creeping up, and firing at our sentries, who had some narrow escapes. Having learned from prisoners taken during the day's engagement that over fifteen thousand of the enemy were all around us, a chain of sentries, 20 yards apart, supported by picquets, was formed. about one hundred yards from and all around the camp. A thunderstorm came on just at dark, and lasted without intermission until 3 a.m. In less time than I take to write this we were completely drenched through : the rain appeared to descend in a body, putting all the fires out instantaneously ; the lightning, too, was at times blinding. All our baggage had been left at Aggimanu, we having

nothing but our great coats ; and though huts had been made, no banana, plantain, or palm leaves could be found to thatch them, consequently, we had no protection from the storm. A cask of rum arrived at 3 a.m., and this was at once distributed, and fires were lit as well as we could, around which we stood and allowed our clothes to dry on us. Captain Cope and Quarter-Master Stanley, with 17 sick men had been left at Aggimanu to take charge of the baggage ; a like number from the other regiments composing the expedition had also been left behind, so that the place was garrisoned by about sixty men, who, during the advance on Coomassie, stockaded it with the help of the carriers also left there. During the engagement at the Dah, the battalion lost eight men wounded, and fired 2580 rounds ammunition. The wounded were taken on in Doolies with the rear guard.

*February 4.*—During the night from 3 to 4 o'clock the engineers and sailors had constructed a narrow bridge across the Dah, which we crossed at 7 a.m. and immediately on arriving on the other side of the river became engaged with the enemy, who fought furiously, and it was evident from the volleys they fired that all their forces were concentrated for this day's fight. Gradually, however, we drove them back till we gained the village of "Ordahsue," D E and G companies 2nd Bn. Rifle Brigade leading. Here it was *the most obstinate fight we had* took place, and the whole of the troops were engaged. The enemy completely surrounded the village, overlapping our small force in every direction. They kept attacking each side of the village in turn. About 2 p.m. an advance was made by the three companies of the advanced guard, and the 7-pounder and Rocket Batteries, and they fired several rounds amongst them, sending a whole swarm of them who were capering their war-dance in the pathway to their "happy hunting ground." The 42nd now came up and joined the advanced guard, leaving the remainder of the battalion and Naval Brigade behind with the detachment 23rd



Regiment to defend the village, (Ordahsue). At the moment of the advance the enemy drew off his forces in front, and made a grand attack in rear, which was most vigorously repulsed by the marines and sailors. The column therefore advanced without further opposition and came suddenly upon the King and generals of the enemy, sitting in their state chairs (about 100 yards in front), and who at once fled. The Ashantis being again repulsed in their attack on the rear, and finding their King and generals fled, resisted no longer but retreated in the greatest disorder.

The road was strewn with war-horns, drums, and fetishes. The great war fetish, about 7 feet high, was captured. The column advanced to Coomassie without firing another shot, having to wade through two very swampy rivers. Coomassie was reached about 5 30 p.m. Numbers of armed Ashantis were walking about and coming in from the bush; a great number crowded the entrances of their houses to look at the army, but they offered no resistance, and readily laid down their arms. When the rest of the troops had joined the advanced column the whole were formed into line in the market place. Sir Garnet then rode out to the front, and three cheers were given for her Majesty the Queen (the Ashantis all running away at the sound). Quarters were then told off, and all men ordered to remain in our own lines ready to turn out at a moment's notice, and to keep their belts and pouches on and their rifles by them. Picquets were also posted on all the main roads. During the engagement the battalion fired about 20,000 rounds of ammunition, and had nineteen men wounded and one sergeant missing. He was last seen at Ordah Sue, in the bush; it is, therefore, supposed he must have been shot dead, as no cry was heard from the direction he was skirmishing in.

*February 5.*—During the night the town was set on fire in several places, partly by the Ashantis, (who were captured, and at once hanged), and partly by the native allies who were looting; they were all secured and severely flogged in the morning. Several of our

companies had to turn out and prevent the fire from spreading, by pulling down the houses in advance. After two hours' hard work, from 2 to 4 a.m., the fire was subdued. Early in the morning D Company was sent back to the coast with a convoy of sick and wounded, which left the battalion very weak.

An armed guard of one captain, two subalterns, and 100 men were placed on the King's Palace, to prevent any looting. They captured a great chief, (second in command to the King,) with about £700 worth of gold dust on his person, which he had come into the town to fetch. One section of each company had to keep their belts on permanently, as the houses are scattered far apart, and many of them are entered by a narrow passage admitting only one person at a time. The jungle, consisting of high tiger grass and brushwood, grows quite close to the houses, and a sharp look out had to be kept by the picquets. It rained heavily during the day.

*February 6.*—Paraded at 6.30 a.m., and turned our backs on the remains of Coomassie. The King's Palace was looted, undermined by the engineers, and blown up; an immense quantity of silks, satins, etc., etc., being also destroyed. The remains of the town were burnt, and the walls thrown down. In consequence of the rains, the roads were flooded greatly, and the men had repeatedly to wade sometimes nearly up to the waist. On reaching the Dah, at 3 p.m., the river was much flooded, and covered the bridge nearly 3 feet. The baggage was taken through the river. The men, at a distance of 6 feet apart, crossed the bridge; the rear companies did not cross till 6 p.m. The 42nd (as it was dark) were ordered to take off their clothes, which were carried across by the Fantees, and they had to wade and swim through the river. Camped at night on the old camping ground of 3rd February.

*February 7.*—Left the camp at about 6 a.m. and marched to Aggimanu, where the baggage had been left on 3rd February. On arrival there, found that the captain left in charge had gone on with his Company (D), which left us at Coomassie. The baggage had all been used to form barricades with, and was found in a deplorable state. Most of the packages had been opened, and articles which the men had preserved to bring home, (as trophies,) had been abstracted; no doubt by our friendly allies. Capt. Hon. H. Wood, (10th Hussars,) was sent off from this place, with despatches for



England, stating the successful issue of the campaign. We learned here, that whilst we were attacking the enemy near Coomassie, Foomannah, in our rear, had been set upon by the Ashantis, and the whole of it burnt, with the exception of the fortified part, where the garrison of sick, and the West Indian Regiment were stationed, which part was successfully defended by them. Quarter Master W. J. Stanley, who was left with Capt. Cope, at Aggimanu, had been sent back with fever and dysentery to Amoaful, and Lieut. Harrington was appointed Acting Quarter Master. Fever and dysentery, which had been diminishing on the advance to Coomassie, set in again in a very severe type, and the sick list at Aggimanu shews 19 men present sick, and 6 officers and 129 men sick, absent at the different stations.

*February 8.*—Left Aggimanu at 6.15 a.m., and marched to Amoaful. The appearance of the battalion was really startling. Men who had landed six weeks previous, strong, robust and healthy, were reduced to mere skeletons, and had lost that soldier-like smartness and activity they had displayed on the march up country. A proclamation from Sir Garnet Wolseley was read out this evening's parade, thanking the men for their services, as follows :—

"Soldiers, Seamen, and Marines. After five days' very hard fighting, under very trying circumstances, your courage and devotion have been rewarded with complete success. I thank you, in Her Majesty's name for your gallantry and good conduct throughout these operations. In the first phase of this war the Ashanti army was driven back from the Fanti territory into its own country. Since then, you have penetrated far through a dense forest, defended at many parts with the greatest obstinacy. You have repeatedly defeated a very numerous and most courageous enemy, fighting on its own ground, in well selected positions. British pluck, and the discipline common to Her Majesty's land and sea forces, have enabled you thus to overcome all difficulties, and to seize the enemy's capital, which now lies at our mercy. All the people, both European and natives, held unjustly captives by the King of Ashanti, are now at liberty in our camps, and you have proved to this barbarous people that England is able to punish her enemies, no matter what their strength in numbers be, or the position they hold. Maintain on your return march to the coast, the same admirable conduct that

you have hitherto evinced, and, England may be as justly proud of having such soldiers, as I am of having had the honor of commanding you throughout this campaign."

*February 9.*—The roadside to-day was found to be literally covered with the dead Ashantis, and we had great difficulty in marching over them. Left Accrowful 6.15 a.m., and marched to Ahkankuassie. All loot made during the campaign was collected, and handed over to the Prize Agents. The Prize Committee caused great ill-feeling and grumbling amongst the men, by taking even little brass ornaments, not worth two pence, and small strings of worthless beads, from them, but which possessed considerable value in the eyes of the men, from their having been taken from the bodies of the Ashantis whom they had killed.

*February 10.*—Left Ahkankuassu at 6.15 a.m., and marched through Foomannah to Quissah. An envoy from King Koffee came in offering a quantity of gold dust if the troops will not destroy any thing more. Four days are granted to deliver it, and Sir Garnet remained at Foomannah to receive it. Captain Butler joined yesterday, his army of Akins having entirely deserted him when within ten miles of Amoaful. An Ashanti party crept into his camp one night, and fired a volley into his sleeping troops, which so scared them that they left him next day. Private Taylor and Sergt.-Cook, T. Armstrong, 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, recommended for the medal of distinguished conduct in the field; the former for having at Ardahsu, on the 4th February attacked five Ashantis: two he shot, one he killed with his sword-bayonet, the others escaped; and Sergt. Armstrong for having defended his party of cooks and coolies, carrying the camp equipment against nine Ashantis which attacked them. He shot two, and severely wounded five others.

*February 11.*—Paraded at 6 a.m., and marched to Accrowful, recrossing the Adansi Hills. Halted at Moinsey, and had cocoa. Halted again on the Parrokee river at noon, and have a mid-day meal, as the march was nearly seventeen miles. Reached Accrofooma, at 3 p.m. Left the remainder of the expedition at Quissah.

*February 12.*—Paraded at 5 a.m., and marched twelve miles to Esseauiau. Halting for breakfast at the Foomosso river, arrived at 1.20 p.m., 34 men sick, present



*February 13.*—Paraded at 5.15 a.m., and marched eleven miles to Prahsue, halting at Altobiassue, and having cocoa. All natives stopped and searched before crossing the bridge on the Prah. Learned to-day that Captain Glover marched into Coomassie on the 7th February, and found it utterly destroyed. He had a sharp battle on the 2nd February and completely routed the enemy.

*February 14.*—Paraded at 5 a.m. and marched to Barracoo, about eight miles; a number fell out to-day entirely worked out.

*February 15.*—Paraded at 5.30 a.m., and marched to Yancoomassie Assin, about nine and a half miles. Church Service read to each Company by their Captains. In the afternoon Captain Butler joined and announced that King Koffee had made a treaty and had paid 1,050 ounces of gold dust.

*February 16.*—Paraded at 6 a.m., and marched twelve miles to Sutah. Halting at Faissowah for cocoa.

*February 17.*—Paraded at 6 a.m., and marched to Mausu, ten miles and three quarters; a number of men fell out, and the sick list shows 4 officers and 43 men, present.

*February 18.*—Paraded at 5 a.m., and marched eleven miles and a half to Yancoomassie Fantee; here we left 5 men who were too ill to continue the march.

*February 19.*—Paraded at 3 a.m., and marched ten miles to Accrowful, left 4 sick.

*February 20.*—Paraded at 4.30 a.m., and marched seven miles and a half to Inquabun; left 24 sick, which shews 16 officers and 92 men on the list, present.

*February 21.*—Paraded at 2.45 a.m., and marched seven miles to Cape Coast Castle, which was reached by 6 a.m. Baggage was embarked whilst we had cocoa at the castle. The battalion then embarked in surf boats, and all was on board the "Himalaya" by 8.30 a.m. 3 officers and 57 men were left on shore, and they were sent on to Connors Hill where a Field Hospital had been erected. The vessels in the bay were all flying their bunting, and fired a salute as we embarked. The battalion were regaled with beef steaks and onions, and cocoa on their arrival on board, and the seamen were most kind to the men, and made them as comfortable as they possibly could.

*February 22.*—Thirty sick men were sent from the Victor Emanuel (hospital ship) in the morning, and 58 in the evening, and all hands had to rig up hammocks for them on the upper troop deck, as the hospital accommodation was not sufficient.

*February 23.*—Sailed for England at 6.30 p.m. Heartily glad to turn our backs on the West Coast of Africa, and longing once more to be at home.

*February 24.*—The library books which had been sent out from England for the use of the troops were now issued, but very few availed themselves of this treat, every one seemed utterly worn out and cared only to sleep. One man died to-day from the effects of dysentery. He was sewn up in a hammock, a shot was placed at his head, another at his feet, and the burial service was read over him (at 8 p.m.) by the Chaplain, the vessel shut off steam for a few seconds while the body was consigned to its last resting place, and then galloped on as if impatient at the delay.

*March 4.*—Nothing occurred of any interest up this date. Sighted the St. Vincent Islands at about 5 a.m., and find H.M.S. "Tamar" and "Simoon" in the harbour coaling. One man (Worth) died just as we anchored. The Pioneers made a coffin and took the body to bury it on shore, but the port authorities would not allow it, consequently they had to sew the body in a hammock, and the steam launch went out seaward, and gave the poor fellow a watery grave. We took 400 tons of coal on board here, having to wait until the other vessels had completed their compliment.

*March 7.*—Sailed at 1.50 p.m. for Gibraltar, weather beautifully fine, the health of the battalion was rapidly improving, and many faces were seen on deck to-day that had not been visible since leaving Cape Coast.

*March 12.*—Sighted the Canary Isles about twenty miles south west. Shows of flying fish seen.

*March 14.*—Sighted the coast of Morocco (Africa.)

*March 16.*—Take our dark clothing into wear again.

*March 17.*—Arrived at Gibraltar at 6 p.m. after a very heavy gale of ten hours duration which swept the decks and smashed the bulwarks in. The "Himalaya" behaved nobly, but had a very severe time of it, and it was thought at one time she would go down. The captain was at his post during the gale and enforced silence, tell-



ing the men that he should order them all below if his command was not obeyed. Two men died during the gale and were buried on shore. Landed 53 men who were too ill to continue the voyage. *5203A*.

*March 20.*—Leave Gibraltar at 2 p.m. ; weather fine ; sighted H.M.S. "Malabar" from India with troops, and overhauled her about midnight, and passed her after "passing salutes," and had a splendid run of 5 days when we sighted the land and anchored for the night at Spithead.

*March 26.*—Steamed to Portsmouth dockyard at 8 a.m., and landed at 1.30 p.m. Just as we were landing a telegram arrived from her Majesty inquiring after the state of health of the Battalion, and thanking them for their services rendered. Marched through Portsmouth to the Governor's green, when an address was read by the Mayor of Portsmouth, to welcome us home. At the Railway Station an immense concourse of people had assembled, and greeted us with a perfect hurricane of cheers. After partaking refreshments, we started by special train for Winchester, and arrived at that city at 5.30 p.m. The old city was astir, and every available nook was secured by the inhabitants to catch the first glimpse of the "Ashanti heroes." The streets were covered with bunting, triumphal arches, garlands of flowers, and brilliantly illuminated. Marching was out of the question ; we made the best of our way through the crowds of people, headed by our band, to the Barracks, and here everything was made as comfortable as possible. We were nothing loth to turn in, and get a good night's rest once more in a bed, the first we had laid in for nearly five months.

*March 27.*—Receive the following from her Majesty :—"The Queen is extremely proud of the conduct of her Troops in the recent engagements in West Africa. The Queen desires that her warmest thanks be conveyed to Sir Garnet Wolseley, and to the officers and men under his command, who, notwithstanding the fever and sickness from which they suffered, have behaved with such conspicuous gallantry, and whose conduct throughout has earned the Queen's highest approbation."

*March 28.*—Inspected by his Royal Highness the Field Marshal, Commanding-in-chief, who expressed great satisfaction at finding the Battalion in such an efficient state so soon after their trying campaign.

*March 30.*—Reviewed by her Majesty the Queen, in Windsor Great Park. As we marched past the saluting base, the thousands present greeted us with prolonged cheers. The Prince of Wales met the Battalion at the Station, and when we had formed up in the Station yard, rode to the front, and made an excellent speech, alluding to the position his late father (the Prince Consort) held as Colonel of the Rifles, and how proud he was on that occasion to be in the uniform of the Corps, and to be in command of them. Prince Arthur was also present in the uniform of Captain (Rifle Brigade).

*April 2.*—The inhabitants of Winchester invited the Battalion to a banquet at the Guildhall. Nearly all the Corps were present (sick and wounded excepted) and a magnificent spread was set before us. Every one seemed to enjoy himself. After the banquet grog was served *ad libitum*, and cigars, ditto. Several capital speeches were given and replied to, and the Corps marched home to Barracks about 10 p.m., very pleased with their reception by the Winchester people.

“The Brigadier General, commanding the European Brigade, takes this opportunity, the first that has offered itself of seeing the Regiments of the Brigade together, since they commenced their downward march from Coomassie to the sea, to thank the non-commissioned officers and men, composing the Brigade, for their conduct upon the expedition which has just terminated. Before he left the vessel, in which he accompanied the 42nd to England, he had great pleasure in conveying to that Regiment the sense he entertained of their services; and, before now taking leave of the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, he desires to express to Colonel A. F. Warren, 2nd B. R. B., his appreciation of the gallantry displayed by his Regiment in the field, and his perfect satisfaction with the excellent conduct which characterized them in camp and on the line of march. No words of his could convey more to this Regiment than that in his opinion they fully sustained at Amoaful and Ordahsue, and throughout the campaign the historical reputation with which they entered it. In resigning his connection with the Brigade, the Brigadier General desires to express his warmest acknowledgement of the consistent support he has received from all ranks.”



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